
Introduction to the Three-Year Plan for the Development Of California's Assessment System

**Developed by the State Board of Education
and the California Department of Education**

One component in the successful implementation of California's assessment system is a clear vision of the path that lies ahead. This three-year plan identifies the essential landmarks for the continuing development of the system over for the next three years. Key features are listed in the plan by assessment program and the year the feature will be implemented.

In order to facilitate statewide discussion and to gather the timely input of all interested parties, it is important to identify some of the key policy issues that have not yet been resolved and are currently under study:

- 1) Implementing a Writing Sample in 2004 as a component of the Grade Eleven California Standards Test in English-Language Arts. (Page 3) This issue will likely be determined as part of the final STAR 2003-2005 contract in June 2002.
- 2) Separating the STAR norm-referenced test (NRT) from the California Standards Test in English-Language Arts and moving to a survey form of the NRT for all grades, 2-11. (Page 3) State law requires the State Board to make a finding on this issue by 2005.
- 3) The State Board will determine whether it is appropriate to continue with the four tests in integrated science. Topics under consideration include the number of tests offered, the content coverage on the tests, and/or whether to eliminate statewide assessments in integrated science. (Page 3) This topic will receive consideration at the May 2002 State Board meeting.
- 4) When appropriate studies have been completed, the State Board will consider alternative ways of passing the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) requirement by demonstrating comparable, rigorous, standards-based achievement. (Page 5)
- 5) Based on the evaluation of statewide student performance and reports from the Independent Evaluation of the CAHSEE, the State Board will consider whether the consequences of the CAHSEE will apply to the graduating class of 2004. (Page 5) A Board decision is required by August 1, 2003.

Based on the provisions of the new federal education legislation known as "No Child Left Behind" (the reauthorized ESEA), changes to this plan may be required. Consideration by the Board of any changes will likely occur during the fall/winter 2002. The CDE will make the revised document broadly available for discussion at that time.

Three-Year Plan for the Development Of California's Assessment System

March 21, 2002

In July 2000, The California Department of Education and State Board of Education jointly developed a long-term plan for the state assessment program. The plan described a three-year timeline for the completion of the state's assessment system. Considerable progress has been made over the past year. Initial development of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) standards-based tests (known as the California Standards Tests) was completed. Students took for the first time the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) and California English Language Development (CELDT) Test. Legislation to reauthorize the STAR Program contributed significantly to the dialogue over the future direction of the assessment system.

This document updates the July 2000 long-term plan. This updated plan differs from the 2000 Plan in that it focuses on the development plan for each of our major state tests, the connections between the tests, and an overall plan to assure the quality of the tests. The six principles, however, remain an integral part of the state's plan. The six principles are:

1 State tests will focus instruction on the mastery of state content standards.

State assessments must be aligned with state content standards. Coverage of the standards should be evaluated to ensure that essential standards are assessed each year and other standards are assessed on a routine basis.

2 All state assessments will conform to rigorous technical standards.

State tests need to be valid and reliable, and in general should meet the criteria for test development, administration and use described in the "Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing," published by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. The state will develop a policy on testing accommodations that is common, to the extent feasible, for all state assessments.

3 STAR standards tests will be the "core" of the state testing and accountability system.

The California Standards Tests (CST) are designed to be "end-of-grade / end-of-course" assessments of the content standards. As the core of the assessment system, these tests are used to identify students who achieve the desired (or proficient) performance level. The CST will be added into the Academic Performance Index (API) and will carry with it the most weight in the API calculations.

4 A nationally normed test will provide national comparison data on student achievement.

The nationally normed test (NRT) in STAR will continue, in order to add stability to the API and to help parents and educators understand student performance in comparison to national samples of students.

5 Other state assessments will be coordinated with STAR.

The state also should eliminate duplication and reduce testing time to the extent possible. The content of the other major state tests (GSE, CELDT, CAHSEE) must be coordinated with related California Standards Tests.

6 State assessment results should be designed to be as useful as possible to school administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

The state should provide as much information as possible about student performance on the assessments so that school programs can be improved in assisting students to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program

The STAR Program is comprised of three elements—a nationally normed (NRT) achievement test, the California Standards Tests, and a Spanish-language nationally normed test. The STAR Program will undergo a major transition over the next two years. First, the state will select new NRT for use beginning in 2003. Second, while the existing NRT (the Stanford-9) has been a primary element in the API to date, the importance of the CST results will increase as it is incorporated into the API calculations over the next two years. Performance standards have been used to report student scores for the English Language Arts (ELA) tests in 2001, and performance standards have been or will be finalized for subjects of mathematics, science and history / social science CST's for the 2002 test administration.

Nationally Normed Test

2003 STAR

- The State Superintendent of Public Instruction will recommend to the State Board of Education (SBE) a new test for the 2003-05 to replace the Stanford 9.

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- To determine the impact on scores related to the new tests versus the achievement of California students, an equating study will be conducted for the new nationally normed English test in English and the Stanford 9. It is important to find a way to provide comparable information across tests and years. The results of this study will be used to provide some comparative information between the 2002 and 2003 test results that may be used for calculating 2002 growth in the Academic Performance Index (API).
 - The grade 9–11 social studies NRT required during the first five years of the STAR Program will be eliminated and replaced by the CST's for history / social science.
 - The reauthorized program will continue to use a full battery reading and language NRT for grades 2–11. Abbreviated or survey tests may be used for mathematics for grades 2–11, and spelling for grades 2–8, and a full battery science test for grades 9–11.

2004 and Beyond

- By 2005, SBE shall make a finding regarding the use of a short form of the NRT in English-language arts (ELA) in grades 2–11. Factors influencing the SBE's findings include the extent to which: (1) the augmented ELA CST results in an overall reduction in testing time; (2) the NRT in use permits the state to release items used as part of the augmented ELA CST to the field; and (3) a CST can be developed that adequately assesses and provides diagnostic data on lower level students.
- Additional steps to improve the security of the NRT will be investigated, including the development of an alternate form or systematically replacing items on the NRT each year.

California Standards Tests

2002 STAR

- A California General Mathematics Standards Test will be administered to 8th and 9th graders who are not enrolled in standards-based, discipline-specific mathematics courses: algebra I, geometry, algebra II or 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year integrated mathematics. This will result in all students in grades 8 and 9 being required to complete a standards-based mathematics test. The tests' content will be reflective of the CAHSEE and will be based on 6th and 7th grade standards.
- Sub-scores will be reported for all standards tests. The sub-scores provide parents and teachers important information concerning the strengths and weaknesses in student performance in each content strand.

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- Parent reports will be improved to clearly separate the CST and NRT results, emphasize the CST results, and present the results in a more understandable manner.
 - The SBE will consider implementing a writing sample as a component of the grade 11 CST in English-language arts.

2003 STAR

- Legislation reauthorizing the STAR Program will be implemented that includes the following:
 - A 5th grade science test will be developed and field-tested in 2003.
 - An 8th grade history-social science test will be developed and the current 9th grade test will be eliminated. This change will better align the state's testing program with middle and senior high school course requirements.
- The mathematics standards-tests for grades 2–7 will be separated from the NRT and become stand-alone tests.
- Practice materials to reinforce the state's content standards will be made available on the California Department of Education's (CDE) web site.
- Students in grades 9–11 who will have completed algebra II, 3rd year integrated mathematics or equivalent math courses prior to the test administration will take the California Summative Mathematics Standards Test for High School.

2004 STAR

- The STAR grade 5 science tests will be administered for the first time in 2004.

California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)

More than 370,000 students from the graduating class of 2004 voluntarily took the CAHSEE during the spring of 2001. In spring 2002, students from this class who did not take or pass the exit exam in 2001 will be required to take the test. Due to the passage of AB 1609, however, the class of 2005 will take the CAHSEE for the first time in 2003 as 10th graders.

The long-term plan for the CAHSEE focuses on several areas including reducing the length of the test, making it accessible to all students, maintaining its validity and reliability, and examining the possibility of using the STAR California Standards Tests (CSTs) to exempt students from the CAHSEE.

2002 CAHSEE

- Review the current test items to develop the new forms for spring 2002 and beyond. Examine reducing the length of the English-language arts test and revisit the range of discrimination of the mathematics items.
- Revise the format and appearance of CAHSEE for 2002 to ensure that it has a similar test layout as the STAR CSTs.
- Design and authorize, as required by AB 1609, a study of the CAHSEE regarding the requirement of passage of the exam as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation and a condition of graduation from high school. The law states that “the study shall include, but not be limited to, examination of whether the test development process and the implementation of standards-based instruction meet the required standards for a test of this nature.”
- Conduct a study to assess the impact of accommodations, including an analysis of possible differences between the multiple-choice and constructed response portions of the test, evidence of test-item fatigue, correlation with other indicators of achievement, or other relevant areas that deal with accommodation issues.
- Release approximately 120 test items (60 multiple choice for both Mathematics and ELA plus two essays) and provide item analysis reports for diagnostic purposes to districts for the released items.
- Begin studies of alternate criteria by which high school pupils who are regarded as highly proficient but unable to pass the test may demonstrate their competency and receive a high school diploma.

2003 CAHSEE

- Begin yearly multiple administrations of the CAHSEE to provide affected students three opportunities annually to take the exam.
- Conduct a census administration for tenth graders (class of 2005) in spring 2003.
- Complete study of AB 1609 on implementation and recommend to the SBE whether to remove consequences on students of the class of 2004 based on the results of the study.

California English Language Development Test (CELDT)

Schools have completed administering the 2001 CELDT. It seems clear, however, that logistical difficulties created by the test require the state to review the purposes and design of the assessment. For this reason, CDE will continue a thorough analysis of the CELDT for the purpose of easing local administration difficulties.

In addition, CDE plans to evaluate the results from the first administration of the test. Validity studies will be conducted to ensure validity and reliability of the test results. These studies also will review the proficiency levels to ensure they are appropriately established.

2002 CELDT

- As approved by the SBE, implement test and administration improvements designed to reduce testing burden for districts.
- Improvements will include:
 - Students who perform at Early Advanced or Advanced on the Speaking/Listening portion of the test will not have to take that test component (within the same grade level span).
 - A separate answer sheet will be available in Fall 2002 to ease scoring of the annual assessment.
 - Insert additional “stop points” as appropriate in all sections of the test for students unable to respond to test questions.
 - Six to eight week turnaround from pick-up to return of reports for both annual and initial assessments, including monthly pick-ups beginning with the annual assessment in Fall 2002.
 - Provide electronic Tabulation, Interpretation, and Placement (TIP) Guides and data files for initial assessments.
- Develop and post a website to display school and district summaries of CELDT results.
- Conduct a study to verify the accuracy of cut scores for defining the English language proficiency levels. This information may result in test modifications or changes in the preliminary proficiency levels adopted by SBE.

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- Conduct a study of the relationship between CELDT and STAR results for individual pupils. The outcome of the study will help to:
 - develop for the purposes of re-classification a criterion for what constitutes “a range of performance” on a basic skills test for English learners and fluent English speakers; and
 - elucidate the extent to which STAR results can substitute for CELDT results in order to reduce overall testing burden.
 - Revisit the issue of the amount needed to reimburse districts for administering the CELDT.
 - Develop and distribute a Request for Proposals and select a contractor to continue development, administration, scoring and reporting results of the CELDT.

2003 CELDT

- Continue development of the test to further improve test design, streamline test administration and scoring, and timely return of test results.
- Develop CELDT longitudinal student test score database which can be integrated with other statewide assessments.

Golden State Examination (GSE)

SB 233 requires that GSE examinations measure advanced pupil achievement on academically rigorous content standards. In order to meet this requirement, the GSE examinations will consist of some portion of the CST with additional GSE items. This will not occur for GSE examinations where a CST in the subject area does not exist. The combining of the CST and GSE will also provide a reduction in testing time for subjects where a CST and a GSE exist. Furthermore, the California Department of Education, in consultation with University of California and California State University System, will contract for a study to determine if GSEs meet the same psychometric standards of nationally accepted examinations used for determining college placement, credit, or admission. The study is required to be completed by December 2003.

The following timeline focuses on the tasks that will allow for the accomplishment of the above-mentioned legislative requirements.

2002 GSE

- Continue the development plan for implementing provisions of SB 233 as it relates to the GSE and CST working with representatives of the University of California, California State University, California Community Colleges, and K–12 teachers and administrators.
- In a collaborative effort, working groups will complete the GSE augmentation of the CSTs, including field test designs and planned technical analyses.
- Develop and construct forms for 2003 augmented tests in 11th grade English Language Arts and High School Mathematics (which includes Algebra I and II, Geometry, and Probability and Statistics).

2003 GSE

- Complete initial review of the results of the augmented tests to provide analysis and psychometric evaluation in regards to the reliability and validity for using the tests for college placement, credit, or admission.
- First live administration of the augmented grade 11 English language arts assessments and the mathematics test covering comprehensive achievement in high school (covering algebra I, geometry, and algebra II) in the spring.
- Develop new augmented tests and conduct field-testing and analysis of new items for geometry, biology, chemistry, and US History for 2004.
- Review the need for additional GSE tests in content areas identified as having special curricular importance. Evaluate the usefulness of current GSEs for the purposes of encouraging high levels of standards-based achievement and for the identification of high performing students.

2004 GSE

- Fully administer augmented tests in Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, and US History in the spring.
- Provide progress report, in order to meet legislative intent, of the ongoing evaluation determining if GSEs meet the same psychometric standards of nationally accepted examinations used for determining college placement, credit, or admission.

Common Issues for All Tests

- Develop a sufficient item bank to annually accommodate the release of items and the associated student-level diagnostic data to schools (similar to first administration of CAHSEE).
- Continue the development of test support materials to assist schools and students.
- Continue improving the design and format of parent reports to make test results more understandable and useful.
- Improve information and formats for reporting results to educators and schools through the department's website and other reporting mechanisms.
- Continue improving the coordination of logistical issues involved in testing (such as common pre-identification, student demographic data collection to reduce administrative burden).
- Continue to review the psychometric qualities of the state's tests.